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V — *Significance of Worship and Prayer among the Epicureans*

BY DR. GEORGE DEPUE HADZSITS

UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

RELIGIOUS beliefs are not readily changed, and fear of contemporary criticism, and no less a lurking fear of offending the gods themselves, might conceivably have served as a check upon any pagan. The Epicurean interpretation of the pagan body of religion was only one of several that were current in the ancient world, and the Epicureans' reconstruction involved intellectual and moral courage¹ on the one hand, and, on the other, provoked misunderstanding, with a consequent passive suspicion or active abuse. Although the theological propositions of the Epicureans were, in many respects, intrinsically crude, they possessed, nevertheless, for the *sincere* Epicureans a religious value that has not always been clearly recognized; not allowing ourselves, therefore, to be misguided by the artillery of the enemy, it will be our purpose to determine from the Epicurean point of view the Epicurean attitude toward the old body of religion, the Epicurean appreciation of his own new ideal theology, and the factors in the Epicurean adjustment to existing institutional conditions, — with a view, more particularly, to defining the significance of worship and prayer according to the terms of Epicurean philosophy of religion. The habit of worship and prayer among the Epicureans, which has long seemed a veritable mystery "hid under Egypt's pyramid," possessed a clear enough theoretical value according to Epicurean premises, — whatever the actual experience of many Epicureans might have been.

The Epicurean Velleius² was absolutely and uncompro-

¹ Lucretius, i, 62-68, 80, 81, 945, iv, 19-20, v, 160; Cic. *N.D.* i, 85; Philodemus, *Περὶ Εὐσεβείας* (ed. Gomperz, 1866), p. 95, l. 19-26, p. 109, l. 10-16, p. 144, l. 7-9; Diog. Laert. x, 131.

² Cic. *N.D.* i, 18 and 42-56.

misingsly opposed to the old established religious beliefs, to the poets' mythologies, and to other philosophies of religion. For these he had no sympathy whatever, but only contemptuous condemnation and eloquent indignation. Lucretius has given us his view regarding the origin of religious feeling in general, and regarding the causes that had led to the then prevalent conceptions of existent gods and of commonly accepted forms of worship. Lucretius¹ analyzes current pagan beliefs, including cherished mythologies and venerable cults (as, *e.g.*, of Magna Mater, Bacchus, Neptune, Ceres, Pan, myths of Tartarus, myths of Creation), and his critical attitude enables him to explain their several origins and to trace their historicity or historical development. Such a rationalization inevitably dispelled, in large measure, the mystery of myth and cult, and left these without the peculiar fascination they had exercised over the popular mind and imagination, since dogma was robbed of its earlier virtue and reduced to the terms of man's capricious fancy. Epicurus' dogmatic denial² of the value of the old theology sprang from a conviction that the truth was in possession of his school. Similarly Philodemus' dogmatism³ about the nature and existence of the gods—marking the respect that existed within the Epicurean school for the spiritual heritage left to his successors by the founder of that school—included opposition to Stoicism and other philosophies of religion, and a denial of the validity of the old mythologies, as utterly unworthy of gods, as gods!

With no thought of dropping religion out of life, with no suggestion of denying the objective existence of the gods, the Epicurean huge dissatisfaction⁴ with old myths and cults,

¹ Lucretius, v, 1161-1193, 1204-1240, ii, 581-660, iii, 978-1023, iv, 580-594, v, 146-234, vi, 379-422.

² Diog. Laert. x, 123: οἷους δ' αὐτοὺς οἱ πολλοὶ νομίζουσιν, οὐκ εἰσίν. 124: οὐ γὰρ πολλήψεις εἰσίν, ἀλλ' ὑπολήψεις ψευδεῖς αἱ τῶν πολλῶν ὑπὲρ θεῶν ἀποφάσεις.

³ Philodemus, p. 85, l. 5-8, p. 72, l. 3-8, [cf. Cic. *N.D.* i, 32,] pp. 19-43 *passim*; cf. "L'Inscription Philos. d'Oenoanda," *Bull. de Corr. Hell.* xxi (1897), p. 391.

⁴ Lucretius, i, 62-101, ii, 167-183, 581-660, 1090-1104, iii, 978-1023, iv, 580-594, v, 146-234, 1194-1203, vi, 59-80, 379-422. For a parallel to Lucretius' "burning zeal and indignation," cf. Arnobius, *adv. Nat.* iv, 28.

as misrepresenting the truth about the gods, led to a restatement of their real character, altogether nobler, purer, and serener—as Lucretius understood life and God—and to a restatement of the gods' functioning, seemingly reduced to a minimum of all activity.¹ Epicurus' theology "so little meets the demands which the human heart and conscience make of the 'Divine,' . . . so little satisfies the requirements of philosophy, that it has been matter for merriment or contempt to his critics, from Cicero and Seneca to the Fathers, and from the Fathers to the present day."² Despite the metaphysical contradictions and absurdities that in time provoked the dialectic and diatribe of ridicule, the gods of the Epicurean theology inspired the sincere Epicurean with intense enthusiasm, catching for Lucretius³ a certain glow from his cosmic fervor, that comprehended Heaven, Earth, and Hell in its intellectual grasp. To Philodemus,⁴ also, the gods were truly inspiring, great and august, blessed, and in the enjoyment of a supreme felicity that human life through imitation sought to attain. The character of the gods and the nature of their functioning were originally determined to Epicurus'⁵ mind by his conception of *εὐδαιμονία*, and that evaluation of human life in terms of the divine included as essential predicates, immortality and happiness, exaltation above this world of change, and a sublime indifference to mankind. The inspirational⁶ power of the gods, as revealed to the Epicureans, was for them unlimited; the religious problem was counted among the big problems of life, and one of the great conditions of human happiness and superiority was an *Epicurean pious* attitude toward and holy

¹ cf. Arist. *N. Eth.* x, 8, 7.

² Masson, John, *Lucretius, Epicurean and Poet*, 1907, p. 291. Cf., on the other hand, Gussani, "Gli Dèi di Epicuro," in his edition of Lucretius, 1896, I, pp. 227-265.

³ Lucretius, iii, 28-30.

⁴ Philodemus, p. 106, l. 9-10; p. 128, l. 19-22; p. 123, l. 12; p. 148, l. 14-19.

⁵ Diog. Laert. x, 77, 97, 121, 123, 134, 139.

⁶ Diog. Laert. x, 135; Lucretius, iii, 322; Philodemus, p. 148, l. 12-19; "L'Inscription Philos. d'Oenoanda," *Bull. de Corr. Hell.* xxi (1897), p. 369, l. 2-10, col. 4: *θεε μέν γάρ ἴσμεν ὁμοίως τοῖς θεοῖς, χαίρ[ου]μεν.* Diog. Laert. x, 133.

regard for divinity; the perfect Epicurean life¹ consciously sought, through intellectual victories, to approximate that supreme felicity. The new theology was a matter of the deepest conviction with Velleius,²—based at once upon intuition and, as he deemed it, irrefutable logic. About the finality of the Epicurean solution of the great problem there could be to the Epicurean mind no question; the Epicurean's intellectual emancipation was accompanied by the deepest rapture—*cum maximis voluptatibus in eas imagines mentem intentam infixamque nostram intelligentiam capere, quae sit et beata natura et aeterna*³—at the ultimate discovery of the truth about the gods, who, as bodying forth the Epicurean ideals of happiness and perfection, inspired him with most enthusiastic⁴ devotion and allegiance. The Epicureans, as bearers of the truth about the gods, yielded to them a worship that was not, as Philodemus⁵ saw, a result of fear of paining the gods through neglect, but which was an immediate expression of admiration for their surpassing goodness and power:—

προσείχουσ-
θαι γὰρ ἐν τῷ περὶ (θ-
εῶν) (?) οἰκεῖον εἶναι
. φησὶν, οὐχ ὥς
λνπου)μένων (?) τῶν
θεῶν) εἰ μὴ ποιή-
σομεν) ἀλλὰ κατὰ
τὴν ἐπίνοιαν τῶν
ὑπερβ)αλλουσῶν
δυνά)μει καὶ σπου-
δαίῳ)ητι φύσεων.

¹ This fact has often been overlooked; cf. e.g. Woltjer, *Lucretii Philosophia cum Fontibus Comparata*, 1877, p. 167; Masson, *The Atomic Theory of Lucretius*, 1884, p. 168 seq.

² Cic. *N.D.* i, 43-48, 115; cf. the comparatively uncertain tone of Cotta, 61.

³ Cic. *N.D.* i, 49; cf. the criticism of Stoic theology, 37: Ita fit, ut deus ille, quem mente noscimus atque in animi notione tamquam in vestigio volumus reponere, nusquam prorsus appareat.

⁴ Cic. *N.D.* i, 45, 56, 115-117, 121; cf. Zeller, *Stoics, Epicureans and Sceptics*, tr. Reichel, 1892, p. 468.

⁵ Philodemus, p. 128, l. 12-22.

The adjustment of the Epicureans to existing institutional conditions which they did not abandon, was, rather, a conservative actual participation¹ in and due observation of established sacrifices, festivals, holidays, and mysteries, although these, in part at least, proclaimed a different idea of the character and functioning of the gods; the Epicureans conformed to this institutional life, not merely, says Philodemus,² in a conventional, formal manner because required by law and custom but even with a natural enthusiasm, that perhaps betrays the emotional force of ancestral sentiment: —

. . . Ἐπίκουρος φανή-
σεται) (?), καὶ τετηρηκώς
ἅπαντα (?) καὶ τοῖς φί-
λοις τ)ηρεῖν παρεγ-
γνηκ)ώς, οὐ μόνον
διὰ τ)οὺς νόμους ἀλ-
λὰ διὰ φυσικὰς (α-
ιτίας).

Indeed, in the absence of an entirely new ritual and institutional concrete expression of this new theology, the only means of approach to the gods that remained for the Epicurean was a guarded employment of the old machinery of worship, *i.e.* participation in established religious ceremonies and festivals, attendance upon temple worship and use of the ancient terminology; for all of these Lucretius³ had an emotional appreciation as allegory, poetry, and symbolism of

¹ Philodemus, p. 118, l. 3-20; p. 127, l. 8-28; naturally the Epicureans were opposed to oracles [cf. Plut. *adv. Col.* 31, 1125 D-F, *de Def. Or.* 45, 434 D-F], nor could they properly hold priesthoods.

² Philodemus, p. 128, l. 5-12; *idem, de Musica* VH¹ 1, c. 4, 6, in Usener, *Epicurea*, 1887, p. 258.

³ Lucretius, ii, 644-645:

quae bene et eximie quamvis disposta ferantur,
longe sunt tamen a vera ratione repulsa.

655-657:

concedamus ut hic terrarum dictitet orbem
esse deum matrem, dum vera re tamen ipse
religione animum turpi contingere parcat.

Cf. Sellar, *Roman Poets of the Republic*, 1889, p. 368; Lucretius, v, 1161-1167, 1203, iv, 1058, etc.

myths and cults that had the sanction of age and of law ; such appreciation was, however, necessarily accompanied with a conscious intellectual reservation or withholding of intellectual assent, which sought to avoid the blinding cobwebs of superstition and the confusions of thought that attended the older pagan ritual and belief. This was much like pouring new wine into old bottles, and to a contemporary pagan an Epicurean hymning ancient formulae seemed an anomaly ;¹ the Epicureans, engaging in cults and ceremonies that were in large part based upon a different idea of God, were exposed to misunderstandings, to charges of sham and hypocrisy.² However, while Philodemus (*i.e.* Epicurus) in general urges obedience³ to the laws and customs, yet it was with the important reservation⁴ that these did not impose aught of *impiety* upon him ; this reservation strikes the keynote of the entire spirit of the Epicurean worship, for the vital element in the *pious* worship of the sincere Epicurean lay in maintaining pure and sinless beliefs about the gods, and avoiding the seduction of ancient premises that were false despite their age :—

..... καὶ τὸ μέγισ-	
τόν) φησι καὶ οἶονεῖ	
τήν) καθηγεμονίαν	[τι] καθ' ἡγεμονίαν
συνπεριέχον (?) ἔχειν	[ὑπερ]έχον ἐκεῖν[ο
. . κ)αὶ (?) πάντα γὰρ σ(ο-	εῖν)αι
φόν) καθαρὰς καὶ ἀ-	
κάκο)υς (?) δόξας ἔχειν	ἀ[γν]ὰς
περὶ) τοῦ θείου, καὶ	

¹ Such a situation is not without something of a parallel to-day ; cf. Romanes, *Thoughts on Religion*, 1895, p. 39.

² Plut. *adv. Col.* c. 11, 1112 C ; *Non Posse Suav. Vivere sec. Ep.* c. 21, 1102 B ; Diog. Laert. x, 131 ; Origenes, *c. Cels.* vii, 66. Such charges lose in force through the fact that no secrecy attached to the advanced religious doctrines of the Epicureans. Cf. Lange, *Hist. of Materialism*, 1877, 1. p. 100.

³ Philodemus, p. 126, l. 12-19.

⁴ Id. p. 120, l. 16-20 :

δε)ὶ πάντα πελθεσ-
θαι τοῖς νόμοις καὶ
τοῖς ἐθιμοῖς ἕως
ἀν μ)ή τι τῶν ἀσεβῶν
προστάτ(τ)ωσιν.

μεγ)άλην τε καὶ σε-
 μν)ήν ὑπειληφέ-
 ναι) ταύτην τήν
 φύσιν· ἐν δ(ἐ) ταῖς
 ἑορταῖς μ(ά)λιστ' ε(ἰ)ς
 ἐπίνοιαν αὐτῆς
 βαδίζοντα διὰ τὸ
 τοῦνομα πάντα
 ἀνὰ στόμ' ἔχειν . .
 . . . σφοδ(ρο)τέρως
 κατ' ἀ(νάγκη)ν (?) . . .
 . . . τήν ἀληθινὴν¹—

π[άθ]ει σφοδ[ρο]τέρωι
 κατα[σχέτ]ν τῇ[ν]
 τῶν θεῶν ἀφ]-
 θαρ[σίαν] . .

No state could imprison an individual conscience, and a mental reservation was the Epicurean's prerogative, while a re-interpretation of that formal state religious material was a duty to his own sincerity. For many, the use of religious institutions older than the Epicurean school may have been merely a convenient means to an end,² resting upon a recognition of the fact that such institutions, with all their fallibility, often formally, though not vitally, survive the virtual death of the ideas to which they originally owed their birth. Epicurus, whose philosophy was not a militant gospel, did not wave the flag of heresy aggressively; whatever the reasons,³ he seems never to have proceeded to the institutionalizing of his religious beliefs,—a step that would have been contrary to the spirit of his whole philosophy. At any rate, in his devotions, the *pious* Epicurean threw emphasis upon the right idea of God⁴ rather than upon a perfunctory discharge of so-called religious obligations.

Reconciliation was hardly to be expected between such Epicurean freedom and a strict literal interpretation of recognized religious duties with acceptance of all their implications.

For the Epicurean theology, *piety* and *impiety* gained a new

¹ Philodemus, p. 106, l. 1-29; for parallel col., see Usener, *Epicurea*, p. 258.

² Cic. *N.D.* i, 44 : Cum enim . . . firma consensio.

³ Gassendi's remarkable defence (in *de Vita et Moribus Epicuri*, iv, 4) of the sincerity of Epicurean worship emphasizes the political exigencies of the situation.

⁴ cf. Lucretius, v, 1198-1203 with Epict. *Enchir.* 31.

definition.¹ For what the Epicurean must have regarded as a religion of the letter, of the narrow and unenlightened conscience, he substituted what was more nearly a true service of the spirit, in which ritual, ceremonial barriers, craft of priesthoods, cant, broke down before that freedom which was the essence of the Epicurean's supremely individualistic *pietas*.² Unquestionably, in time, Epicurean rationalism³ meant a sweeping away of many of the mysteries and traditions that passed as *religio* and an abandonment of many formal symbols sanctioned by custom and law; but the Epicurean philosophy of religion, far from contemplating a subversion⁴ of religion, had as one of its great and conscious purposes⁵ the establishment of a truer and purer form of worship, a refined form of *pietas* toward the gods. The Epicurean philosophy of religion made war⁶ not upon the gods, but upon erroneous conceptions of the gods, whose temples and altars were to become scenes of a nobler form of worship. Only that *pietas* that was free from what the Epicureans regarded

¹ cf. Diog. Laert. x, 123: ἀσεβής δ' οὐχ ὁ τοὺς τῶν πολλῶν θεοὺς ἀναιρῶν, ἀλλ' ὁ τὰς τῶν πολλῶν δόξας θεοῖς προσάπτων; Lucretius, i, 81-83; Philodemus, p. 94, l. 9-19, p. 144, l. 7-9, p. 95, l. 19-26: ἀλλ' οἱ πολλοὶ νομίζοντες ἀσεβεῖς τοὺς οὕτω περὶ θεῶν ἀποφαινόμενους κολάζουσιν ὡς Ἀθηναῖοι (Σ)ωκράτην καὶ τινὰς ἐτέρους. Diog. Laert. x, 10.

² Lucretius, v, 1198-1203:

Nec pietas ullast velatum saepe videri
Vertier ad lapidem atque omnis accedere ad aras
Nec procumbere humi prostratum et pandere palmas
Ante deum delubra nec aras sanguine multo
Spargere quadrupedum nec votis nectere vota,
Sed mage pacata posse omnia mente tueri.

³ Plut. *adv. Col.* c. 22, 1119 D-E: ἀλλὰ τὸν θεὸν μὴ λέγειν θεὸν μηδὲ νομίζειν, δὲ πράττετε ὑμεῖς, μήτε Δία γενέθλιον μήτε Δήμητρα θεομορφὸν εἶναι μήτε Ποσειδῶνα φυτάλμιον ὁμολογεῖν ἐθέλοντες . . . ὅταν τὰς συνεξευγμένας τοῖς θεοῖς προσηγορίας ἀποσπῶντες συναναιρῇτε θυσίας μυστήρια πομπὰς ἐορτάς.

⁴ Cic. *N.D.* i, 115, 117-119, 121, 123, 124; cf. these attacks with 32: Atque etiam Antisthenes in eo libro, qui physicus inscribitur, populares deos multos, naturalem unum esse dicens tollit vim et naturam deorum, and with "L'Inscription Philos. d'Oenoanda," *Bull. de Corr. Hell.* xxi (1897), p. 393, col. 49², l. 5 . . . ὡς οὐχὶ ἡ(μεῖς ἀναιρο)ῦμεν τοὺς (θεοὺς, ἀλλ' ἔτ)εροι, etc.

⁵ Cic. *N.D.* i, 45: Si nihil aliud quaereremus, nisi ut deos pie coleremus et ut superstitione liberaremur, satis erat dictum.

⁶ Plut. *adv. Col.* c. 21, 1119 B; Diog. Laert. ii, 97; Cic. *N.D.* i, 36.

as superstition, that was released from fear, that was not hampered by the necessity of seeking the favor and avoiding the anger of the gods, that scientifically repudiated belief in Providence and in a divine creation and regulation of the world, that dispensed with *divinatio*, seemed to Velleius¹ a genuine *pietas*, truly *pia* and *sancta*; these attendant conditions were a *sine qua non* of the Epicurean idea of a proper worship of the gods. From this Epicurean revision of the pagan articles of faith there sprang a new conception of the proper relation of man to God, in which — as Lucretius² saw the matter — an older feeling of fear, of superstition, and of unrest associated with a need of propitiation, was superseded by a splendid, confident calm, by courage and admiration.

The Academic pontiff Cotta was utterly incapable of either sympathizing with the Epicurean conception of divinity or of comprehending this step in the evolution of pagan religious experience. The chasm of infinite distance and of divine indifference, that stretched between God and man, seemed all too wide for any bridge to span, and the Epicurean worship³ of gods who did not care for man, a worship without the pagan idea of *communitas*⁴ and of *amicitia*, seemed at once barren and hopeless, futile and without justification. The older orthodox pagan, conventional *pietas* and *sanctitas*, *εὐσέβεια* and *δσιότης* involved a knowledge of the prescribed usages of the established apparatus of worship and were based on a

¹ Cic. *N.D.* i, 45–56; Plut. *Non Posse Suav. Viv. sec. Ep.* c. 8, 1092 B (cf. 420 B, 1101 C, 1123 A, 1124 E–F, 1101 B); Lucretius, ii, 651; Philodemus, p. 122, l. 20–29, p. 123, l. 15–26, p. 145, l. 18–21; Diog. Laert. x, 97, 135; Oxyrh. Papyr., II, n. 215, sec. col., l. 9–19 (see *Riv. di Fil.* 1906, p. 246), etc.

² Lucretius, cf. e.g. i, 83, *impia facta*; ii, 657, *religione* (i, 63, 101); iii, 16, *terrores*; v, 1165, *horror*, 1207, *cura*; vi, 52, *formidine*; *vs.* i, 79, *nos exaequat victoria caelo*; iii, 28, *divina voluptas*; v, 1203, *pacata mente*, etc.; cf. Verg. *Geor.* ii, 490.

³ Cic. *N.D.* i, 115: *Quid est enim, cur deos ab hominibus colendos dicas, cum di . . . homines non colant?* . . . 116: *qui quam ob rem colendi sint, non intellego.* . . . 122: *quid veneramur, quid precamur deos?* *cur sacris pontifices, cur auspiciis augures praesunt?* . . . 123: *quae enim potest esse sanctitas, si di humana non curant?* Plut. *adv. Col.* c. 8. 1111 B: *καὶ γὰρ τὴν πρόνοιαν ἀναιρῶν, εὐσέβειαν ἀπολείπειν λέγει*, rings with scorn.

⁴ Cic. *de Leg.* i, 21 seq.; but cf., for a contrary view, Arist. *Eth.* N. viii, 7, 4, 5; *M. M.* ii, 11.

belief in a reciprocal relation between God and man.¹ This reciprocal relation was the keystone of the ancient belief and worship, the foundation of all organized pagan religion and ritual, and the whole pagan orthodox world shrank from the Epicureans, who *seemed* to break this mould² in which ancient religious prejudice was cast. Sunt enim philosophi et fuerunt, qui omnino nullam habere censerent rerum humanarum procurationem deos. Quorum si vera sententia est, quae potest esse *pietas*, quae *sanctitas*, quae *religio*? Haec enim omnia pure atque caste tribuenda deorum numini ita sunt, si animadvertuntur ab iis et si est aliquid a dis immortalibus hominum generi tributum. Sin autem di neque possunt nos iuvare, nec volunt, nec omnino curant nec quid agamus animadvertunt nec est quod ab iis ad hominum vitam permanare possit, quid est quod ullos dis immortalibus *cultus*, *honores*, *preces* adhibeamus?³ But even among the Epicureans a belief in a reciprocal relation between God and man *did* exist, withal that the gods did not care for man; but the comparative subtlety of the Epicurean *theory* seems not to have been fully comprehended in antiquity,⁴ nor, perhaps, fully realized, in *practice*, even within the Epicurean school, — and the Epicureans remained in religious isolation.⁵ The deeper significance of worship and prayer depended upon the Epicurean definition of *εὐσέβεια* and *pietas*, and included a

¹ Cic. *N.D.* i, 116: est enim pietas iustitia adversum deos; . . . sanctitas autem est scientia colendorum deorum (cf. *de Dom.* 107, *Part. Or.* 78, *Planc.* 80); Xen. *Mem.* iv, 6, 2-5: "Ἐξεστὶν δὲ ὃν ἂν τις βούληται τρόπον τοῖς θεοῖς τιμᾶν; Οὐκ, ἀλλὰ νόμοι εἰσὶν, καθ' οὓς δεῖ τοῦτο ποιεῖν. Cf. Sext. Emp. *adv. M.* ix, 123; Plat. *Euthy.* 12 D-14 D; Ov. *Met.* viii, 724, etc.

² Sen. *de Ben.* iv, 4, 1-3; Plut. *Non Posse Suav. Viv. sec. Ep.* c. 20, 1100 E-1101 A; c. 23, 1103 D; Atticus Eus. *Praep. Ev.* xv, 5, 13, p. 800 c: αὐτῶν (τῶν θεῶν Ἐπικούρου) ἀφείλε τὴν πρὸς ἡμᾶς ἐνέργειαν, ἐξ ἧς μόνης τὸ εἶναι τοὺς θεοὺς ἔμελλε τὴν δικαίαν πίστιν ἔξειν. Arrianus Epict. *Diss.* ii, 20, 23: λάβε τὰ ἐναντία, ὅτι θεοὶ οὐτ' εἰσὶν εἴ τε καὶ εἰσὶν, οὐκ ἐπιμελοῦνται ἀνθρώπων οὐδὲ κοινόν τι ἡμῖν ἐστι πρὸς αὐτοὺς τό τ' εὐσεβὲς τοῦτο καὶ ὅσιον παρὰ τοῖς πολλοῖς ἀνθρώποις λαλούμενον κατάψευσμά ἐστιν 'ἀλαζόνων ἀνθρώπων καὶ σοφιστῶν'. Lact. *de Opif. Dei* ii, 10: unde ego philosophorum qui Epicurum secuntur amentiam soleo mirari, etc.

³ Cic. *N.D.* i, 3.

⁴ Modern criticism seems not to have taken the fact into proper account.

⁵ Plut. *Non Posse Suav. Viv. sec. Ep.* c. 19, 1100 C.

re-interpretation of this reciprocal relation between man and God.

The Epicureans¹ counted themselves among those philosophers who believed that the gods bestow *τῶν ἀγαθῶν τὰ μέγιστα*, but might also be *βλάβης καὶ κακῶν . . . αἰτίους*, — a theory tenable even within the circle of Epicurean theology, a theory subject, however, to re-interpretation by the Epicureans who rejected the vulgar² idea of divine *ὠφελίαι* and *βλαβαί*. Now, the Epicureans resented the charge³ that their philosophy of religion robbed just and good men of their hopes and, on the contrary, claimed that divine *ὠφελίαι* were the rewards⁴ of goodness, wisdom and justice, while *βλαβαί* were the penalty⁴ of evil; indeed, the very greatest blessings being in store for 'piety,'⁵ the salvation of Heaven was within the grasp only of such as through qualities of virtue, and wisdom, approached to kinship⁶ with the gods. The Epicurean denial of the truth of the older conception of objective, concrete rewards and punishments rendered these, rather, a matter of psychological reaction. "Images of a Zeus, a Heracles, an Athena might pass in and impress the aspect and character of each Deity upon the mind, and carry with them suggestions of virtue, of courage, of wise counsel in difficulty, of many of the things which human nature is wont to seek from a higher

¹ Philodemus, p. 86, l. 21-25; cf. Sen. *Ep.* 95, 50 for the Stoic doctrine; perhaps Diog. Laert. x, 134, has a hint upon this question.

² Philodemus, p. 97, l. 17-25.

³ Philodemus, p. 94, l. 19-25; p. 145, l. 11-21.

⁴ Philodemus, p. 100, l. 9-15.

⁵ Philodemus, p. 145, l. 11-21:

⁶ Philodemus, p. 124, l. 2-10:

. . . τῆς ἀγαθῆς
τοίνυν ἐλπιδος
τοὺς εὐσεβεῖς τὸν
τρόπον ἀποστεροῦ-
μεν οἱ καὶ μεγίστην
αὐτοῖς ὠφέλειαν (ἐκ
τῶν θεῶν ὑπογρά-
φοντες, καὶ τὴν πο-
νηροτάτην ἀνα-
κόπτοντες αὐτοῖς
προσδοκίαν; . . .

καὶ σωτηρίαν (σὺ ἀνθρώ-
ποις διὰ τοῦ θεοῦ κα-
ταλειπτόν, ὑπογρά-
φει διὰ πλειόνων·
ἔν τε τῷ(ι) τρεῖς καὶ
δεκάτῃ περι(ι) τῆς
οἰκείωτος ἡ(ν) πρός
τινας ὁ θεὸς ἔχ(ει) καὶ
τῆς ἀλλοτριότητος·

Power.”¹ Divine rewards and punishments were visited upon possessors respectively of a true or a false knowledge of God, —

οὐ γὰρ προλήψεις εἰσὶν, ἀλλ’ ὑπολήψεις ψευδεῖς αἱ τῶν πολλῶν ὑπὲρ θεῶν ἀποφάσεις. ἔνθεν αἱ μέγιστα βλάβαι τε τοῖς κακοῖς ἐκ θεῶν ἐπάγονται καὶ ὠφέλειαι [τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς]. ταῖς γὰρ ἰδίαις οἰκειούμενοι διὰ παντὸς ἀρεταῖς τοὺς ὁμοίους ἀποδέχονται, πᾶν τὸ μὴ τοιοῦτον ὡς ἀλλότριον νομίζοντες,²

not, then, subject to the caprice of pagan gods, but clearly dependent upon individual wisdom and virtue, and limited, of course, to this world, with no hope nor fear on the part of the worshipper of any Hereafter. It would seem that so-called divine punishment was a purely subjective matter, the unrest of error and sin, in no way, of course, attributable to the intent of angered deities.³ Through the mediation of worship and prayer, the intellectually gifted⁴ and the spiritually equipped drew nearest to the gods, in whose care rested that form of redemption which was possible under the terms of Epicurean psychology and epistemology; worship and prayer

¹ Masson, *Lucretius, Epicurean and Poet*, p. 285; pp. 284–286, represent a great advance upon his earlier article “Lucretius’ Prooemium and Epicurean Theology,” in *The Jour. of Phil.*, VIII (1879), but neglect many important considerations. Pascal’s interesting “La Venerazione degli Dèi in Epicuro,” in *Riv. di Fil.* XXXIV (1906), 241–256, differs from the present study in many vital respects.

² Diog. Laert. x, 124.

³ Lucretius, vi, 68–75: quae nisi respuis ex animo longeque remittis | dis indigna putare alienaque pacis eorum, | delibata deum per te tibi numina sancta | saepe oberunt; non quo violari summa deum vis | possit, ut ex ira poenas petere inbibat acris, | sed quia tute tibi placida cum pace quietos | constitues magnos irarum volvere fluctus, | nec delubra deum placido cum pectore adibis. Cf. Sext. Emp. *adv. Phys.* i, 19: ἔνθεν καὶ εὔχεται εὐλόγων τυχεῖν εἰδῶλων. Atticus Eus. *Pr. Ev.* xv, 5, p. 800^a: ἤδη δὲ ταύτη γε καὶ κατ’ Ἐπικούρου δνῆσις τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἀπὸ θεῶν γίνεται· τὰς γοῦν βελτίονας ἀπορροίας αὐτῶν φασὶ τοῖς μετασχούσι μεγάλων ἀγαθῶν παραιτίας γίνεσθαι. Philodemus, p. 86, l. 13–23.

⁴ Epicurean religiosity was a matter of enlightenment and its intensity was in proportion to the clarity of the vision. Cic. *N.D.* i, 49: Epicurus . . . docet eam esse vim et naturam deorum, ut primum non sensu, sed mente cernatur; Lucretius, v, 148–149; vi, 76–78; Diog. Laert. x, 139; Stob. *Ecl.* i, 66; Plut. *de Plac. Phil.* i, 7, 15; Cic. *N.D.* i, 116: sapientem; Philodemus, p. 106, l. 6, σοφόν.

were but the media, the final means, in fact, of communication with the gods, whereby the Epicurean — through the saving grace of wisdom having become susceptible to the divine influence — was capable of receiving that blessing from the gods which alone, according to Epicurean thought, was a possibility. Worship and prayer completed the religious mood of the suppliant wise man, who alone could obtain from the gods what Epicureanism characterized as *μεγίστην ὠφελειαν*! Under all these conditions, the reciprocal relation between the Epicurean and his gods, resting on the worshipper's intellectual-spiritual aspiration, was completed by the reward of inspiration of a divine tranquillity, — while the consequent subjective exaltation to realize in conscience or in deed that which might have been the formal burden of Epicurean prayer constituted the test of its efficacy. . . .
*τοῖς θεοῖς καὶ θαυμάζει τῇ[ν] φύσιν [αὐτῶν κ(αὶ)] τὴν διάθεσιν καὶ πειρᾶται συνεγγί[ξιν] αὐτῇ καὶ καθαπερὲ γλίσχεται θιγε[ῖν καὶ συ]νείναι, καλεῖ τ[ε] καὶ τοὺς σοφοὺς τῶν [θεῶν] φίλους καὶ τοὺς θεοὺς τῶν σοφῶν.*¹

This was a paradox that baffled the hostile jury of the school's critics, to whom worship and prayer among the Epicureans seemed incongruous, a fallacy, an offence to the Epicurean's conscience and a violation of his convictions. Inconsistency,² however, lay *not* in the *fact* of worship and prayer, — which, indeed, received intellectual justification in the Epicurean school, — but might consist in the *nature* of that worship and prayer. Unfortunately, no official prayer-book of the Epicureans exists (never did exist, perhaps), but speculation upon some aspects of that type of worship and prayer that possessed validity according to Epicurean doctrine, is not altogether idle. The ideality of the gods to the Epicu-

¹ Philodemus, *de Deor. Victu*, VH.¹ vi, col. 1. Seneca's phrases are misleading; *de Ben.* iv, 19. 3: quia nullum habes illius beneficium, . . . 4: nempe hoc facis nullo pretio inductus, nulla spe; as also, Cic. *N.D.* i, 116: nullo nec accepto ab iis nec sperato bono; Plut. *Non Posse Suav. Viv. sec. Ep.* c. 23, 1103 D: ἐλπίζεις τι χρηστὸν παρὰ θεῶν δι' εὐσέβειαν; τετύφωσαι· τὸ γὰρ μακάριον καὶ ἄφθαρτον οὐτ' ὀργαῖς οὔτε χάρισι συνέχεται is *not* true Epicurean doctrine.

² Decharme, *La Critique des Traditions religieuses*, 1904, p. 255.

rean imagination and the character of the divine inspiration must have determined the limits and restricted the scope of Epicurean prayer. The best Epicureanism¹ might conceivably have felt a sympathy for that wide-spread, deep-seated dissatisfaction (expressed outside the Epicurean school), that ancient protest² against pagan prayers which required purification and reformation. Epicurean prayer that sought to lift the worshipper to the majestic level of the gods must needs have been an expression of the Epicurean's most exalted aspiration, and Epicurean theology — with all its refinements that recognized incongruity in the presumption and vulgarity³ of *customary* worship, sacrifice, and prayer — could have sanctioned only petitions for those divine qualities of wisdom, justice, beauty, happiness, and repose of which the gods were the true keepers.⁴ If the theory of Epicurean worship and prayer failed⁵ through the frailty of human nature, it none the less remains a verity that within the scope of Epicurean philosophy there existed this possibility, at least, of securing to worship and prayer a new purity, dignity, and nobility. Though the efficacy of that worship and prayer rested upon the wisdom and purity of the individual life, it did *not* possess a *disinterested* character,⁶ nor find its satisfaction or lose

¹ Εἰ ταῖς τῶν ἀνθρώπων εὐχαῖς ὁ θεὸς κατηκολούθει, θάπτον ἂν ἀπώλλυντο πάντες ἄνθρωποι, συνεχῶς πολλὰ καὶ χαλεπὰ κατ' ἀλλήλων εὐχόμενοι. See Usener, *Epicurea*, p. 259, fr. 388.

² Juv. 10, 346–366; Plato, *Alc.* ii, 142 E, 143, 148 C; Xen. *Mem.* i, 3, 2; Val. Max. vii, 2, ext. 1; Cic. *de Domo*, 107; Lucian, *Icarom.* 25; Philodemus, p. 145, l. 18–21.

³ cf. Pers. *Sat.* 2, 68 seq.; Plat. *Alc.* ii, 150; Epict. *Enchir.* 31; Sen. *Ep.* 95, 50, etc.

⁴ cf. Plato, *Phaedrus*, 279 B: ὦ φίλε Πάν τε καὶ ἄλλοι ὅσοι . . . θεοί, δοίητέ μοι καλῶ γενέσθαι τὰνδοθεν, ξέωθεν δ' ὅσα ἔχω, τοῖς ἐντὸς εἶναι μοι φίλια.

⁵ Lucian, *Icarom.* c. 32; Lucian, *Zeus Tr.* c. 22; Cic. *in L. Pis.* 59; Athen. *Deipn.* v, 7, 179 D (while not true of Epicurus himself, doubtless true of Epicureans of a later date when a genius for debauchery had developed).

⁶ cf. Guyau, *La Morale d'Épicure*, 1886, 177; Picavet, *De Epicuro Novae Religionis Auctore*, 1888, 110–111; and “Épicure Fondateur d'une Religion nouvelle,” in *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions*, xxvii (1893), 338; Decharme, *La Critique des Traditions religieuses*, 1904, 256–257; Pascal, “La Venerazione degli Dei in Epicuro,” in *Riv. di Fil.* xxxiv (1906), 242, 247; *Cl. Phil.* ii (1907), 188.

itself in mysticism or mere contemplation, but rather, true to the self-centred nature of Epicurean ethics, sought, ultimately, the greatest attainable happiness of the individual suppliant. Sacrifices might properly continue, — not, however, as a means of influencing¹ or of assisting deity, but more nearly as an expression of admiration for divinity; but Epicurean sacrifices, offered even in such a spirit, aimed at no revolution of the older pagan *quid pro quo* relation with the gods, inasmuch as by contributing to the religious mood of the wise man, they facilitated the reciprocal relation between the Epicurean and his gods. But with a finer sense and a deeper conviction of the proper relation of man to God, Epicurean worship, sacrifice, and prayer were the profound adoration, the inevitable tribute of veneration of the disillusioned for the permanent and the perfect in the universe.² Such was the spiritual uplift of the gods! Epicureanism, though realizing that God might not need man, never lost sight of the everlasting instinct of a human need of God: τὰ δὲ τοσαῦτα λεγέσθω καὶ νῦν, ὅτι τὸ δαιμόνιον μὲν οὐ προσδεῖ[τ] αἰτινος τιμῆς, ἡμῖν δὲ φυσικὸν ἐστὶν αὐτὸ τιμᾶν.³ Prayer was *not*⁴ incompatible with Epicurean doctrine, but the premium that was placed upon individual intelligence raised the utility or the validity of prayer beyond the grasp of all save a few, — and the Epicurean school, by a strange irony of fate, suf-

¹ Lucretius, v, 165–166; Lact. *Div. Inst.* vii, 5, 7; *de Ira Dei*, ii, 7; Diog. Laert. x, 139; Lucian, *Icarom.* 32; Lucretius, ii, 651; Sen. *de Ben.* iv, 19, 2; Cic. *N.D.* i, 121.

² Sen. *de Ben.* iv, 19, 4: Propter maiestatem, inquis, eius eximiam singularemque naturam; Cic. *N.D.* i, 45: nam et praestans deorum natura hominum pietate coleretur, cum et aeterna esset et beatissima; 116: At est eorum eximia quaedam praestansque natura, ut ea debeat ipsa per se ad se colendam allicere sapientem.

³ Philodemus, *de Mus.* VH¹. i, c. 4, 6.

⁴ Zeller, *The Stoics, Epicureans, and Sceptics* (tr. Reichel, 1892), p. 464, is not correct in saying "together with Providence, the need of prayer . . . is at the same time negated," nor does the "captious argument" of Hermarchus [Procl. 66 E (Diehl) in Plat. *Tim.* 27 C] prove this at all; cf. also Schmidt, *Veteres philosophi quomodo iudicaverint de precibus*, 1907, p. 24 (Philodemus, p. 77, is most uncertain evidence). Cf. Schoemann, *De Epicuri Theologia*, 1871, pp. 337–338; Wallace, *Epicureanism*, 1880, p. 207; James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 1908, pp. 463 seq.

ferred all the ignominy and the rancor more properly due to the impious and to atheists.

In the specific instance of the Lucretian invocation of Venus, all of the ancestral associations, — mythological, artistic, religious, poetic, political, historical, — while possessing for the orthodox pagan mind a magisterial influence, constituted for Lucretius, as an *Epicurean*, merely a time-honored, though in part false, drapery that hardly obscured the truth from any sincerely religious Epicurean. However strong the emotional appeal of older fancies might have been, the Epicurean's intellectual enthusiasm must have been reserved for the religious truth that lay behind the veiling. Only a surmise that Lucretius wrote this invocation prior to the time that he embraced Epicureanism might relieve us, to-day, of the necessity of putting an Epicurean interpretation upon it; as an Epicurean invocation, it is, of necessity, addressed not to Nature¹ nor to an abstract law of Nature, not to the Venus of antecedent antiquity nor to such a goddess robbed of her power and possessing merely an allegorical or symbolic significance, — but to the goddess of *Epicurean* theology, to whom *Epicurean pietas* could in all consistency pray,

quo magis aeternum da dictis, diva, leporem.

¹ Cic. *N.D.* i, 36: Zeno, autem, ut iam ad vestros, Balbe, veniam, naturalem legem divinam esse censet, eamque vim obtinere recta imperantem prohibentemque contraria. Quam legem quo modo efficiat animantem, intellegere non possumus; deum autem animantem certe volumus esse. Atque hic idem alio loco aethera deum dicit, si intellegi potest nihil sentiens deus, qui numquam nobis occurrit, neque in precibus, neque in optatis, neque in votis; aliis autem libris rationem quandam per omnem naturam rerum pertinentem vi divina esse affectam putat. . . .